

Transylvania County Natural Area Inventory

DRY BRANCH BOG Significant Natural Heritage Area

Site Significance: Regional
Quadrangle: Standingstone Mountain

Size: 231 (51 acres in primary areas and 180 in secondary)
Ownership: N.C. Division of Forest Resources (DuPont State Forest)

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES: Dry Branch Bog contains a small but Regionally-significant example of a Southern Appalachian Bog. In addition, a high quality Low Elevation Granitic Dome, a small population of French Broad heartleaf (*Hexastylis rhombiformis*), the presence of timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*), and potential rattlesnake den habitat support the regional significance of this site.

LANDSCAPE RELATIONSHIPS: The site is located within the Buck Forest Macrosite, surrounded by a cluster of natural areas in DuPont State Forest. Tarkiln Mountain/Grassy Creek Gorge lies less than one mile to the east. The Little River/Cedar Mountain Natural Area is approximately 0.5 miles to the southwest, and Joanna Mountain is nearby to the south. Three other standard sites lie within two miles of Dry Branch Bog. The bog is primarily surrounded by semi-mature forest and pine plantations with several dirt roads and small openings present.

SITE DESCRIPTION: This site includes the basin of Dry Branch and the ridge to the east. Dry Branch is a small, low-gradient creek with an unusually wide, flat floodplain that contains a Southern Appalachian Bog intermixed with Swamp Forest-Bog Complex, and some younger Acidic Cove Forest. A small population of French Broad heartleaf grows within the pine stands that surround the bog. The ridge on the east side of the site contains a very good quality, moderately sized Low Elevation Granitic Dome community. Timber rattlesnakes make use of these rocky outcrops and probably den in the area. A small area of dry Montane Oak-Hickory Forest surrounds the outcrop. Much of the secondary area is comprised of white pine stands and immature forest.

The Southern Appalachian Bog lies in the unusually flat floodplain of Dry Branch, north of its confluence with Grassy Creek. The bog is located below the Low Elevation Granitic Dome, nested within stands of white pine and Montane Oak-Hickory Forest. The wetland hydrology is maintained by seepage off the western slope and by impermeable layers of sandy clay loam in the floodplain. The canopy is generally closed and dominated by red maple (*Acer rubrum*), tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), and white pine (*Pinus strobus*). The shrub layer is a mosaic of rosebay rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*) and mountain dog-hobble (*Leucothoe fontanesiana*) thickets with more open areas of tag alder (*Alnus serrulata*), highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), wild-raisin (*Viburnum cassinoides*), and arrow-wood (*V. carolinianum* [= *dentatum* var. *carolinianum*]). Boggy openings contain abundant *Sphagnum* moss, cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), manna-grass (*Glyceria striata*), sedges (*Carex*